

Testimony of
Amanda Hamblett, Genetic Counselor, Middlesex Hospital
in support of
SB 857- AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSURE FOR GENETIC COUNSELORS
February 20, 2015

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Amanda Hamblett and I am writing to testify in support of **SB 857 An Act Concerning Licensure for Genetic Counselors**. I live at 9 Bayview Place Madison, CT and practice as a Genetic Counselor at Middlesex Hospital Cancer Center in Middletown, CT.

I am a Board Certified Genetic Counselor, since 1999, and I am the only provider certified by the American Board of Genetic Counseling in the Cancer Center at Middlesex Hospital. I am an integral part of the Cancer Center, working closely with oncology, surgery, radiology and radiation oncology to provide individualized cancer care to our patients.

- **My role as the Cancer Genetic Counselor is critical to patient care:**
 - I provide both healthcare professional and community education regarding identification of individuals at high risk to develop cancer as well as appropriate management of these individuals.
 - I participate in Case Conferences to identify individuals at increased risk for hereditary cancer who may require alternative management options.
 - I evaluate family histories to determine a pattern of inheritance and likelihood of hereditary cancer.
 - I explain family history and hereditary cancer assessment in easy to understand terms with appropriate psychosocial support.
 - I educate about genetic testing options, including benefits and drawbacks of multiple complex tests as well as implications of results for patient and family members.
 - I discuss genetic test results, explain implications for medical management, refer to appropriate healthcare professionals, and emphasize importance of sharing risk information with family members.
- **In order to provide this critical care:**
 - I keep up-to-date, through training and continuing education, with advances in clinical cancer genetics.
 - I continuously assess genetic technology and genetic laboratories to ensure patients are tested appropriately and with tests which meet or exceed the current standard of care. This has become particularly challenging as many emerging laboratories now offer genetic testing of unknown quality but have strong marketing.
 - I have a deep knowledge base in genetics and genetic testing, to interpret complex genetic test results and determine appropriate cancer risk assessment and medical management recommendations.

- **Health and Safety Benefits**
 - Licensure can ensure that patients and consumers are protected from unqualified providers, and unregulated practices.
 - The State can prevent harm by ensuring that providers who represent themselves as genetic counselors have the appropriate training and continuing education.
 - Prevention of adverse events when genetic counseling and/or testing occur without a certified genetic counseling professional
 - (1) incorrect risk assessments provided to patients or (2) results misinterpreted, which may result in incorrect management including unnecessary prophylactic surgeries.
 - wrong test ordered, which may waste resources and result in incorrect management.
 - Licensure is needed in order to ensure that the quality of these professionals remains high and that the public is afforded the best level of care.
- **Access to Healthcare**
 - The demand for genetic counseling and testing is increasing.
 - Licensure of genetic counselors will assist those healthcare providers making referrals by identifying qualified and appropriately trained professionals.
 - Licensure will remove constraints on billing for genetic counseling, thereby allowing medical centers to hire more genetic counselors and improve patient access.
 - Billing for my services is problematic at Middlesex. Although my institution has committed to providing critical genetic counseling by a Board Certified Genetic Counselor, it is regularly reevaluated due to billing complexity and poor reimbursement.
- **Economic impact**
 - Incorporating genetic counselors into the testing process has been shown to lead to cost-efficient risk identification and more appropriate genetic testing.
 - Significant savings in healthcare spending for patients with cancer, neurological disorders, cardiac disorders, and other genetic diseases has been documented.

Specialized and current knowledge is critical for providing accurate genetic counseling and thus ensuring that patients benefit from genetic information.

I emphatically support this act which will ensure individuals are provided access to quality Genetic Counseling services. Thank you for your time and consideration.